UNITED NATIONS **S**

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1998/554
22 June 1998
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

LETTER DATED 19 JUNE 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to draw your attention to the statement issued on 9 June 1998 by the Presidency of the European Union on Kosovo.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) John WESTON
Permanent Representative of the
United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland to the United Nations

98-17677 (E) 230698 230698

/...

Annex

[Original: English and French]

Statement issued on 9 June 1998 by the Presidency of the European Union on Kosovo

We are deeply concerned at the intense fighting in Kosovo. The reports of widespread house-burning and indiscriminate artillery attacks on whole villages indicate a new level of aggression on the part of the Serb security forces. We are disturbed by reports that these attacks are beginning to constitute a new wave of ethnic cleansing. We strongly condemn this action, which, together with the systematic exclusion of international observers from affected areas, demonstrates that Belgrade is engaged in a campaign of violence going far beyond what could legitimately be described as a targeted anti-terrorist operation. We insist on an immediate stop to all violent action and call for the withdrawal of special police and army units.

We are particularly concerned by the growing stream of refugees into northern Albania caused by the continuing conflict. This illustrates the threat posed to regional security and stability by the deteriorating situation in Kosovo. We are strongly interested in the return of refugees to their homes in Kosovo, preferably with monitoring by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The European Union will play its part in addressing the refugee problem in a comprehensive way within the region itself.

The Council of the European Union is equally concerned by the growing human cost of the violence. It is in close touch with the relevant humanitarian agencies and stands ready to offer its assistance. Full access of humanitarian organizations, in particular the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to the areas of conflict is indispensable. Furthermore, international forensic experts should have the opportunity to carry out the necessary investigation in order to clarify the circumstances in which civilians have died. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia authorities have an obligation to cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991.

We further believe that it is time to strengthen the international monitoring capacity in Kosovo, in order to provide a more accurate picture of developments and to encourage a political solution. The European Union will consider a contribution to this through the European Community Monitoring Mission.

We continue to condemn any use of violence for political ends on either side. The European Union is determined to play its part in stopping the flow of money and weapons to the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). Neighbouring States have a particular responsibility to ensure that their territory is not used in support of KLA activity. We will continue to work with them to ensure that their security is not jeopardized by the continuing violence in Kosovo.

The priorities in Kosovo are to end violence and to establish a genuine political process, which is the only viable alternative to continuing conflict. We are disappointed by the very limited progress made so far in the talks between Belgrade and Pristina. We call upon Belgrade to take urgent steps to reduce the tension in the province so as to create the stable environment necessary for political progress. We reaffirm our support for Ibrahim Rugova's resolve to seek a political solution through dialogue. The European Union supports the granting of special status, including a large degree of autonomy for Kosovo, within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

President Milosevic bears a special responsibility as head of the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for promoting a peaceful settlement to the problems of Kosovo. He should not believe that the international community will be taken in by talk of peace when the reality on the ground is ever greater repression. In the light of the grave deterioration of the situation on the ground, involving the excessive use of force by the Serb security forces, the Council has today adopted a common position for a ban on new investments in Serbia. The European Commission will act rapidly to make the necessary proposal for implementation of the ban on new investments in Serbia. The Council will adopt the regulation on the freeze of funds of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbian Governments as soon as possible. The European Union remains ready to press ahead with other measures against Belgrade if the authorities there fail to halt their excessive use of force and to take the steps needed for genuine political progress. Furthermore, the European Union encourages international security organizations to pursue their efforts in this respect and to consider all options, including those that would require authorization by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Council regretted and condemned President Milosevic's refusal to permit the Gonzalez mission to commence work on the basis of the Council's discussions and conclusions, expressed its continuing support for Felipe Gonzalez as its Special Representative and approved the joint action to give practical effect to this support.

The associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus, and the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area have aligned themselves with the present statement.